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CHAPTER XVI

FREE PROFESSIONS

463 IT is not surprising that a rich and complex culture like Nupe should possess its clearly defined *artes liberales*—its professional scholars, scientists, and artists, or, in a terminology more akin to the native conception, its Mallams, barber-doctors, and drummers and dancers. I will leave the discussion of the profession of Mohammedan scholars for the chapter on education, and deal here with the last two of these 'free professions'.

BARBER-DOCTORS

'Free professions' in the sense in which we are using the term here does not necessarily mean 'individualistic' professions or professions unattached to any organization or co-operative unit. If what I have said in the preceding chapter about the meaning of guild-organization is correct, we may expect to find it developed also in the field of these native *artes liberales*. In fact, we do find it, adjusted to the new field of activity, in the barber-doctors of Nupe. We can no longer speak here of home industry; nor is the element of co-operation and mutual assistance the same as in the industries. But the other factors that tend to call into being a closely co-operative organization are clearly visible: we find again the necessity of long, specialized training, even to the degree of adoption into a trade secret; we also find the existence of a constant 'market' for the products and services of the craft; and lastly, we find a close relation between the group of craftsmen and the political system of the country.

305 759 As in medieval Europe and the Orient, the barber of Nupe, *gozan*, is also doctor and surgeon. His activities are numerous: he cuts the hair of men, women, and children; he shaves the head and cuts the tribal marks of newborn babies at the name-giving ceremony. For a tenth of a penny he cuts finger- and toe-nails: a few barbers have specialized in tattooing. The barbers also dispense medicines (mostly worthless[1] infusions and charred powders made of herbs) for every known disease; they perform certain minor surgical operations—circumcision or blood-letting—and administer the *turare*, a potent inhalation of the smoke from certain medicinal herbs. Certain barbers know the secret of contraceptive medicines, others know cures against barrenness; others, again, are experts in the treatment of lunacy. This far-reaching competency is the most characteristic feature of the craft of Nupe barber-doctors. Leaving aside the ordinary routine work of the barber and certain simpler operations such as the cutting of tribal marks, we may say that every barber

[1] This judgement is based on an analysis in the Wellcome Research Laboratory in London, for which I am greatly indebted to this institution, of certain drugs made by the Nupe barber-doctors which I had brought home from Nigeria. The discussion of the more specifically medical questions I must leave for a future publication.

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has his own speciality, his own expert knowledge, his cures, and his special field. No wonder, then, that the Bida barbers are not of equal standing: there are famous 'celebrities', and there are also the smaller fry. The public is aware of these distinctions. It is well aware also of the special field of certain foreign barber-doctors who frequently come to Bida to practise. Thus, for example, it is generally known that the operation of removing the uvula of children—an operation said to help growth and secure better nourishment—is performed only by Hausa barbers. The more surprising, then, is the fact that this array of specialists and special cures is not equally accessible to every citizen of Bida or Nupe. For the barbers are organized in three independent guilds, one in each *ekpā* of the town. Neither doctors nor patients ever ignore these boundaries. Each guild, or guild section, is under its own titled head, who as a rule has also a 'second-in-command' (who is 'heir designate' to the guild-headship at the same time) to assist him in guild work. In the *Etsu* Umaru quarter guild-head and 'second-in-command' are called *Ndeji* and *Ndabaki*; in the *Etsu* Usman quarter *Tsadzo* and *Ndamaraki*; in the *Etsu* Masaba quarter we find only one guild rank, who is the present head of the guild at large, the *Sokyara*. This highest guild office is taken in rotation by the three guild sections.

The Bida barbers, busy and prosperous, do not practise farming in addition to their main occupation; nor do sons of barbers ever follow any other profession. On the contrary, men of other professions may become barbers. I have recorded three recent cases: two were adults, one a farmer and the other a (Fulani) herdsman; the third was a young man, the son of a straw-hat maker; the two adults settled later as barbers in villages; the young man, who came from Bida, remained there to practise his craft. To learn the barbers' craft proper does not take long: the apprentice works only a year under a master (without changing his habitation). The master, during this time, pockets the larger part of the apprentice's earnings. The apprentice himself buys the instruments of his new trade—a collection of old-fashioned razors, costing about 4*s.* to 5*s.* But to learn the medical side of the craft requires (I was told) a five-years' apprenticeship. One of the two men just mentioned had done this, and is to-day a practising 'doctor'. Let me add that neither the 'trade secrets' of the barber-doctors nor the training in the craft involve any magical or religious conception and form of procedure. It is purely a craft technique.[1]

The special cures and forms of treatment are secrets of individual barber families. They are handed on from generation to generation and are the common property of all adults in a family (though not of the

[1] Nupe society also possesses a certain group of 'doctors', or, more precisely, 'medicine-men'—*cigbeciši* (*cigbe* means 'medicine')—whose craft is based on magical ideas and is closely linked with divining and the religious system of the country. I cannot describe here their organization more fully. I will only say that they practise mostly in the pagan districts, and that they are united in a loose 'order', acknowledging a common head, the *Etsu Cigbeciši* in Bida. To-day the modern conception of the barber-doctor is gaining ground also in the pagan villages. I found a significant effect of this transition in two Nupe villages—'medicine-men' and diviners who were practising barbers at the same time.

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305 759 592 larger group, the guild section or guild). The work of the barbers is organized on the familiar lines of *efakó* and *bucá*. Although their work does not entail actually working together, a certain kind of work is regarded as a concern of the family group as such and as falling under the rules of *efakó*. The *efakó* principle itself is interpreted in an unusual sense. In the work of the barbers orders or summons do not usually reach the individual barber directly, but come to him via the head of the household, who allots the various tasks to the different family members. The proceeds from all work carried out on these lines are divided among the whole *efakó* group, in accordance with a certain schedule which takes into account the seniority of the different family members. The tasks 305 759 553 592 which come under *efakó* rule are the most highly paid jobs: the shaving of the hair and the cutting of tribal marks at the name-giving ceremony, and the circumcision of boys. The first task is performed at the occasion of an important household feast, and the barber-doctors rarely fail to benefit from the generosity that goes with festal mood. These simpler operations are executed by the younger men of the family, but the family head and the older men will also be present, as guests quite as much as in their professional capacity—which latter may reveal itself in no more than an occasional hint thrown out to the young colleague. The barbers will all sit together, and in front of them there will be a bowl into which every visitor is expected to drop a coin, the largest contribution coming from the parents of the newborn child. Let us follow the fate of a shilling dropped into this bowl of the barbers at a name-giving ceremony in a Bida house: 2*d.* is retained by the grandmother, who held the infant during the operation; 1*d.* goes to each of the five junior members of the *efakó* group (including the young man who performed the operation); 1½*d.* each to two older men of the family, the family head and his younger brother; and 2*d.*, finally, to the head of the guild section.

305 759 All other work of the barbers is regarded as *bucá*: ordinary haircutting and shaving as well as medical treatment.[1] The latter, more lucrative, work is a prerogative of the older men, who alone know herbs and drugs and can perform the *turare*. The younger men will be taught these craft secrets when they reach a certain age. And thus another principle of family work is realized in the organization of the Nupe barber-doctors, namely, the balance in favour of senior family members which we have observed in the organization of farm-labour and native industries.

305 759 467 We have seen that in the distribution of *efakó* income a certain contribution goes to the head of the guild section. This, then, is a first instance of economic co-operation of the large professional unit. This co-operation is visible also in another, external, feature of this professional organization. In each of the three day-markets of Bida there is a special barbers' 'hall', a spacious open hut, where all the barbers (specially the family heads) meet in the afternoon, and sit and wait for clients and summons. This hut is built and kept up from a common fund. The existence of this common fund is itself evidence of a close co-operation in the financial field. Into this fund, which is called *dashí*, every barber

[1] The barbers are usually paid in money; but when the Bida barbers tour the country villages they often take firewood or food in lieu of payment.

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pays a small amount of money at regular intervals; the fund is administered by the guild-head; he deducts from it money for possible common expenses, and pays out the rest in full to every member of the guild section in turn, after every pay-day. This financial arrangement is fairly common in Nupe, specially among traders and labourers, and we shall discuss it in more detail later. The barbers, however, are the only professional group which has embodied it in its professional organization and utilizes it as a system of mutual financial assistance vested in the craft-guild.

The guild organization is restricted to Bida town. In the villages, even in the larger places, one or two barbers are sufficient to meet the normal demand. Besides, the medicine-man of the pagan districts would constitute a serious competition to the Bida doctors. But so far as barbers and barber-doctors are wanted in the country, the organization in the capital supplies them, either permanently or temporarily. Certain Bida barbers, for example, have settled in villages; others tour the country regularly, stopping in this or that place for longer or shorter periods. Even in these tours of the country districts round Bida, the barbers keep to the territory of 'their' royal house, i.e. the royal house on whose land in Bida their home stands. Although it clearly cannot be said of the barber-doctors that they 'serve the state' in the same way as blacksmiths or leather-workers, this arrangement is a striking evidence of the fact that their association with the political structure of the country is as strongly marked, and that they, again, are in certain respects the 'king's craftsmen'.

DRUMMERS AND DANCERS

The drummers in Bida, true to the more 'advanced' urban conception of art, are individualists; in the village, where the art of drumming belongs not only to the recreational side of social life, but also forms part of the organization of ritual and ceremony as well as production (we remember the part drumming plays in the farming *egbe*), it is less an 'art' in the modern sense of the word than a 'craft', working for well-defined institutionalized demands, and charged with responsibilities of a graver order. Drumming in the village thus moves in the framework of a close organization on guild lines. In every larger Nupe village we find a special group of drummers and musicians who, though belonging to different families and houses, yet recognize the authority of a common head, the *Etsu Dzã*, the King of the Drummers. Certain other, subordinate titles, are distributed, in guild fashion, among the other members of the craft. The art of drumming remains in the family and is handed on from father to son. You may see small boys practising drumming on little toy-like instruments under the eye of the father. They will go with him wherever he is called to perform, watching him and, when they are sufficiently advanced, accompanying him on their own drums. Sometimes boys from other families desire to become drummers. Their father will then get in touch with the head of the drummers, and give him his son as apprentice. The young apprentice will visit the drummer's house every day for his lesson. In the beginning

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18. Levelling the ground over a new grave

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19. The master of the *cigbeciĩ* in his ' dispensary'

[p. 118 (b)]

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reasoning from analogy, it clearly belongs, with all the other treatments just mentioned, to our second category, of practices utterly incongruous and not even conceivably capable of the alleged effects.

We must add, further, that a great many therapeutic remedies are ascribed so multifarious an efficacy that their 'rational' application to one kind of ailment is belied by the other, extravagant claims. The same substance will serve as an antidote for snakebite, as a cure for headaches, and as a potion applied in ordeals; and a herbal concoction for intestinal troubles will also be used to cure rheumatic pains in the fantastic manner just described. Thus the borderline between rational and pseudo-rational treatments is once more blurred, and the province of the former narrowed further. And here we may note that in a sense the Nupe wish to keep it narrow. For the one version of medicine which comes nearest to satisfying our two conditions of rational intent and empirical (if crude) appropriateness, that practised by the barber-doctors, is also criticized for this very reason. The barber-doctors are entirely profane practitioners, whose skill is a matter of cleverness and learning, involves no secrecy, and is at the disposal of all who can pay for their services. But their practice is largely restricted to the capital and the more sophisticated large villages, and little known or little thought of elsewhere. Indeed, the country people simply laugh when you suggest that the barbers have a knowledge of *cigbe*; 'barbers', I was always told, 'know no *cigbe*; all they can do is to cure headache'. Now some of my informants certainly knew that this was incorrect; furthermore, several village *cigbe* of the secret and mystical kind were also supposed to cope with headache. It was therefore not the efficacy of the remedies which the people held in ridicule but their purely profane character; and in denying that the barbers possessed any worthwhile knowledge of medicine, they really denied that their knowledge deserved the name of medicine. We note, then, a bias towards excluding from the genus *cigbe* those remedies which combine all the characteristics of a rational practice. The true *cigbe*, the people seem to feel, must at least in some respects bear the mark of the extraordinary or 'magical'. But this is no more than a bias since even in the villages where the art of the barber-doctors was so derided there exist purely profane, would-be rational remedies.[1] Their number, however, is strikingly small; so that in the peasant culture of Nupe, unlike the urban culture of the capital, the non-mystical or non-'magical' *cigbe* represents an exception from the rule.

[1] Also, this 'bias' is being obliterated by the modern usage of the word *cigbe* for all European drugs and medical appliances, in which the Nupe see nothing transcendental or magical, but the application of 'knowledge' proper.

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Let me summarize. By our criteria of rational and mystical intent the whole range of non-therapeutic *cigbe* together with a good portion of the therapeutic ones would fall in the category of transcendental practices (religious or 'magical'); while only the rest of the cures proper, good, bad, and indifferent, would belong on the side of reason or near-reason. And since a great many of the cures in the former category are 'objectively' as futile or absurd as the non-therapeutic variety, it may be said that the Nupe tend to treat as 'magical' what is, by all standards, magical and to aim at miraculous effects by means openly designed for miracles.

2. PHARMACOPOEIA NUPEANA

It seems convenient to insert here a fuller description of Nupe medicines and medical (or pseudo-medical) treatments. Their therapeutic or non-therapeutic character will become clear from the description, as will also the share of 'irrational' or mystical observances. We must, however, anticipate the various classes of medicine experts and briefly state their respective specialities. First, we have the guild of barber doctors, who are all Mohammedans and whose craft is entirely therapeutic and would-be empirical; a few minor instances of 'ritualization' do not contradict the generally rational intent. Secondly, there is the corresponding and predominantly pagan order of *cigbeciži* or *bociži* ('medicine-men'), whose practice, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, invariably betrays mystical intent. Thirdly, there are a few individual experts who belong to neither organization and may employ any kind of *cigbe*. Lastly, we shall meet with the owners of hereditary medicines, vested in the lineage or (in Nupe parlance) 'house'; these are both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, and always conspicuously mystical. In one isolated case a conspicuously 'mystical' medicine is owned by a whole community. Let me also recall that some medical practitioners are diviners at the same time, though there is no firmer link between the two professions.

These are some of the remedies known to the barber-doctors of Bida. Stomach trouble is treated by means of various potions: one consists of the infusion of a certain swamp plant; another, of the infusion of the charred bark of the oil-palm; sheanut tree or locust-bean tree, mixed with natron;[1] a third, of the pounded roots of a certain tree, mixed with powdered eggshell, dried in the sun and then taken with water. Light headache is cured by burning a certain common plant and making the patient inhale the fumes,

[1] The 'natron' is natural carbonate of soda from Lake Chad which is on sale in all Nupe markets.

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757 means of a potion. For the inhalation one uses leaf-tips of the oil-
278 palm, hair of a she-goat, and the pulverized genitals of a he-goat, all burned together in a pot; the potion is made of the sap of a certain 'male' shrub (that is, the fruitless variety, called *darabagi*, 'male *dara*'), the charred bark of another, mixed with natron. The patient, having been treated in this fashion, is said to calm down and eventually to recover, though the cure can never be certain. For violent and dangerous attacks there is no agreed cure. The barber-doctors, in fact, do not treat this form of insanity at all, but other people sometimes know a treatment, though it is always said to be difficult and uncertain. Thus one informant suggested that the patients must be made to fast until they calm down; and another recommended flogging (a treatment apparently widely applied in Yoruba country).[1]

757 A final group of medicines bears on conception and virility.
278 Dried cocoyam, the charred bark of the *savi* tree, and onions,
342 pounded and taken in water, are said to constitute a powerful
[832] aphrodisiac. Fertility of women is ensured by a potion, drunk the morning before cohabitation, made of an infusion of leaves of the tamarind tree mixed with natron. Delivery is facilitated by rubbing the womb with three herbs after they have been soaked in water for a night. There are also two 'contraceptive' medicines, one having a temporary effect only, the other believed to cause permanent barrenness. The former consists of two powdered herbs, mixed with bits of grass from a termite mound, and taken with water; the latter, of the charred stalk and leaves of a young cassava plant, mixed with henna root and natron, boiled in water, and drunk. The knowledge, incidentally, of the permanent 'contraceptive' is claimed to be purely platonic; the Bida practitioner at least has no chance of applying it in practice, not because he is reluctant to do so or because the Bida women avoid these shameful practices, but because they would not risk their reputation by thus openly consulting a 'doctor' in the town. Instead, my informants assured me, they go to 'medicine-men' in the villages, where they are unknown and their secret will be safe. A secret in fact it is; and here we meet with a first, though fairly mild, instance of reprehensible medicines, employed for immoral ends.

757 This list is far from complete, omitting, especially, the many
759 variants of the same kind of cure.[2] The barber-doctors do not believe in specifics in the strict sense of the word; rather, there are several treatments for each ailment, and different practitioners

[1] The informant in question came, in fact, from Shari, a village on the border of Nupe and Yoruba.

[2] I recorded altogether thirty-four remedies known to barber-doctors, which number is probably fairly exhaustive.

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will often know and apply different ones. Also, some specialize in potions or in poultices and lotions; others prefer treatment by means of inhalations, which the Nupe call *turare* (a Hausa word, meaning 'scent' or 'fumigation'). Certain more versatile experts know several remedies for the same illness, which they would try out one after the other. The position is summed up in this statement of a famous Bida 'doctor': 'Sometimes one medicine proves sufficient; but there is only one way of discovering the right one—to experiment and trust in God.' Certain barber-doctors, too, are specialists in particular diseases and are known as such. Thus only two men in Bida knew how to treat lunacy and only one Bida barber (whom I met in Ibadan, where he was staying at the time) knew how to treat sleeping sickness; similarly, there were specialists for venereal diseases, for eye complaints, and so forth. For certain ailments there are no treatments; their list includes blindness, idiocy, leprosy, elephantiasis, deafness, 'incurable syphilis', and, oddly enough, the common cold; my informants made it quite clear that the last was too trifling a complaint to deserve the attention of 'doctors'.

As we have seen, surgical treatments are almost entirely absent, and the use of splints in fractures is considered no more important than the application of some 'strong' salve or ointment. The barbers, in fact, herbalists at heart, deprecate the 'use of the knife' and emphatically deny its value. Said the head of the barbers' guild: 'The knife begets pain; how could it cure?' Though the same few herbs or plants appear in the majority of remedies, this does not mean that they alone have curative properties. On the contrary, it is considered that all plants contain some medicine, even if its nature or extraction are not known. It is considered equally certain that this medical knowledge, far from being static, is growing all the time, so that the barbers today possess medicines unknown even a short time ago. Once more, this is a question of experimenting 'with the help of God', and there are certain rough rules how to proceed. One tries first the bark of a plant or tree not hitherto used; if this proves worthless, one tries the roots, and finally the leaves or fruits. As to why certain parts of plants should contain *cigbe* and others not, there is no answer; or rather the usual answer is *'cigbe u de 'tsu a'*, 'medicines have no king' (that is, follow no proclaimed law): God has made them so, and men can only hope to learn by trial and error or by accepting the wisdom of others.

A strikingly large number of remedies employ plant parasites (called *etú*), and their special medicinal properties are strongly emphasized. If the alien growth of the parasites once suggested to the people some affinity with the nature of diseases and hence a

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possible application of the principle 'like cures like', no one today is aware of this notion. Nor are there any 'theories' as regards such abstruse ingredients as eggshells, the excreta of fowls, twigs from the nest of vultures, or grass from inside an ant-heap. Yet it is also difficult to see how the precept, 'experiment with the help of God', can have led to these peculiar discoveries. If they are 'superstitions', they are not, like other superstitions, the degraded offspring of more elaborate mystic or cosmological speculations. The treatment of lunacy, with its 'male' and 'female' ingredients, seems to suggest something of the kind; but there is no clear link between this cure and that other idea, that lunacy is a residue of 'male' sleeping sickness.[1] And in all the other fantastic remedies their intellectual antecedents are simply not traceable, not even to legends or folk-tales. Perhaps the remedies have been adopted, more or less blindly, from other groups and countries, on some of those informative travels of which the barber-doctors boast. As they stand, they are merely crude and absurd attempts at 'empirical' treatment, instances of that 'blundering' I spoke of before.

Any of the medicines just described might equally be the product of the *cigbeciži*, and a number are in fact identical. But unlike the barber-doctors, the *cigbeciži* also employ the fully irrational, non-therapeutic version of *cigbe*, and even their remedies proper, salves, potions, and the like, are much more often based on recipes of an incongruous and abstruse kind.[2] Thus a 'strong' potion taken for intestinal troubles includes the fluid extracted from the gall-bladder of snakes, a potion alleged to cure smallpox contains a boiled lizard tail, and an ointment for rheumatic pains is composed, among other things, of powdered potsherds which must be obtained from old pots found lying about with the broken side up, any other position rendering the remedy worthless.

While these recipes seem as random and arbitrary as the more abstruse examples of the barber-doctors' art, others betray some underlying 'theory', some vague and often uncertain reasoning from analogy or from the principle 'like cures like'. Thus one expert had a cure for impotence consisting of a potion whose ingredients included, besides various roots and two kinds of pepper, also the powdered genitals of a he-goat.[3] A contraceptive credited with lasting effect is concocted from the roots of the

[1] See above, p. 37.

[2] Of the twenty-two *cigbeci* medicines I recorded fifteen belonged to that category, while the corresponding proportion in the case of the barbers' remedies was six in thirty-four.

[3] I have this incongruous evidence for the efficacy of the treatment. My servant, who was with me when I visited the expert, at once bought and drunk the potion to increase his virility. The next day I had to doctor him for severe indigestion.

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exalted function, the Nupe would point out that other, ordinary 755
'greetings' are similarly nondescript and uninformative. We re- 789
call, further, that on certain occasions the practice of *cigbe* also includes sacrifices and invocations proper, addressed to God or *kuci*.

We may conclude, then, that even the mechanical manipulations of *cigbe* carry some of that awareness of a transcendental intelligence which turns an otherwise 'magical' act into a religious appeal; and though the faith in this manipulation of 'ingredients' is partly a belief in their mechanical efficacy, this is yet understood to reflect, however indirectly, divine intervention. The *emisa* itself is neither fully a spell nor yet fully a prayer; it is an expression, couched in a conventionalized code, for the varieties of power mobilized in the *cigbe* procedure. Those who know the appropriate expressions also know the entities to which they refer and hence can manipulate them: for in the Nupe way of thinking as in ours there is no true and workable knowledge of anything unless that thing can also be named. Thus, though the *emisa* has no share in the powers it identifies and names, the very fact that it does so makes it an integral part of the mystically powerful operation. Finally, since these 'code' expressions are respectful ones, they stand, not for a simple command, but for a command tinged with submission, for a mastery which is half supplication. in brief, for 'invocations'.

4. THE PERSONNEL

The organization of the Nupe barber-doctors has been described 759
elsewhere, and I need here summarize only the main facts.[1] The barbers are grouped in three guilds, centred in Bida, one in each of the three sectors into which the town is divided. They travel a good deal; a number have also settled in the larger villages in the country, and quite a few in towns outside Nupe. Each guild has its own titled head, elected by the guild and confirmed by the *Etsu* Nupe, who is also the most experienced and most highly reputed member of the profession; which standing is measured, simply, by the number of treatments known to him. In all my discussions with barber-doctors it was always the guild-head who proved the best informed and to whom all others turned when in doubt or at a loss. The profession is loosely hereditary, some usually following in their fathers' footsteps; but men of other families may join the profession through being apprenticed to an established barber-doctor for about five years, during which period they pay for the tuition by surrendering the larger part of their earnings.

[1] See *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 289–301.

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759 This, then, is a purely profane craft organization. Side by side with it exists that other, more secret and 'mystical' order, of the *cigbeci* practitioners. 'Side by side' is not quite the correct phrase; for the latter are active predominantly in the rural areas, though a few *cigbeciži* reside in small hamlets quite close to Bida, as does the present Master of the order. Theirs is quite clearly the older organization, which, in the modern capital, has given way to the Mohammedan barber guilds. Nor does the *cigbeci* organization today enjoy the official sanction of the Nupe State or any affiliation with the ruling dynasty. Yet it did so formerly, even in the Fulani régime, where its Masters were appointed and invested with a special hereditary rank by the sovereign of the country. Indeed, the *cigbeciži* trace the growth of their order back to the *fons et origo* of all things politic and traditional in Nupe country, the first kingdom of Tsoede. The somewhat fantastic pedigree of the *cigbeciži* betrays the mystic nature of the craft; for the third Master was no other than that Kpara who, as we have heard, went up to the sky and brought back the wisdom of 'ingredients'.[1]

This pedigree comprises eight ancestors, the son of the last being the present Master (and my informant), one Sheshi Benu. The first ancestor, said to have lived in the days of Tsoede, came of the sub-tribe Cekpã, from across the Niger, which even today is regarded by all Nupe as deeply versed in all kinds of secret knowledge. It was not he, however, who was the first *cigbeci*, but his son Malu, who acquired that knowledge by unknown means and was granted the title *Tswasha* still by Tsoede. He and his successors always lived in the capital of the kingdom, wherever it happened to be, as the king's official experts. The father of the present Master of the order, Mina Gunu, is said to have lived first in Rabah, the then capital, and to have come to Bida when the centre of the kingdom moved there. His son is a 'Master' only to the members of the order, bearing no longer an official rank, and not very well known to the general public.

I have called the *cigbeci* organization an 'order' rather than a 'guild' to do justice both to its dispersal through the country and to its secrecy which yet allows for the admission of new members. The organization is also extremely loose, involving little actual co-operation beyond occasional ceremonial gatherings and a few 'refresher courses' for the specially keen. But it has a common centre and source, constituted by the Master and his 'house'. Thus all known medicines have been discovered by one or the other Master of the *cigbeciži* and were handed on to the other members of the order. My informant claimed that he himself had discovered

[1] See above, p. 18.

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certain new *cigbe*, and that on such occasions he had called together all his disciples, so that they might be present at the ceremonial preparation of the new medicine and learn its properties. Before him, his ancestors had similarly taught their knowledge to pupils, who in turn handed it on both to their offspring and to others, until the order spread through the whole country and even beyond Nupe. Yet all 'great' *cigbeciži* received their training at the source, from the present Master or his predecessors, and he mentioned five of his disciples to me, two of whom I also knew and from whom I obtained confirmation of this account.

During the period of tuition the pupil lives with his teacher, paying in gifts for the instruction. The secret of the more complicated medicines, known to the Master alone, the pupil must buy for money; which course is also open to any other *cigbe* practitioner even if he never underwent tuition proper. The period varies with the ambition of the pupil; those who wish to become really great experts must study continuously for three to four years, while those with lesser ambition can become proficient by intermittent tuition, for a month or so at a time, during a period of five to six years.[1] No one is refused; anyone who wishes to learn can do so if he has the required intelligence, and the time and funds. No *cigbeci*, however, can live merely on his professional earnings; even the Master practises, at least today, farmwork besides.

The individual *cigbe* experts are once more part-time practitioners, even if, occasionally, they own hereditary medicines at the same time. Nor do they confuse the two kinds of expert knowledge, one possessed by them as individuals, the other vested in the lineage or 'house' to which they belong. The former is often said to have been acquired, more or less fortuitously, on travels, especially to foreign parts; sometimes it is inherited, though only in the fortuitous way in which sons may (or may not) follow their fathers' interests or professions. One owner of *cigbe* thought that his grandfather, from whom he had inherited the skill, had learned it from the *cigbeciži*; but all other informants denied any such connection. The medicines differ greatly in secrecy according to whether they are therapeutic or not. The former are readily disposed of, against payment or return gifts, while the more miraculous medicines are given only to persons one knows well, or with some formality and ostensible hesitation. Let me quote this

[1] My informant drew a terminological distinction between the 'greater' and 'lesser' practitioners; the former alone, he claimed, were legitimately called *cigbeci*, while the proper name for the latter was *boci*. No one else, however, made this distinction, which seems to reflect only the familiar predilection of the Nupe 'intellectual' for neat linguistic categories. *Bóci* is in fact only the Nupe-ized version of the Hausa word *boka*, 'native doctor'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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759 description of the procedure by an expert of great repute; it is interesting also since it illustrates the Nupe bent for neatly schematic and enumerative arrangements. When the expert is approached by a would-be customer he will at first deny all knowledge of the *cigbe* in question and maintain this attitude on three successive occasions; the fourth time, if the client still insists and so shows his eagerness or anxiety, the expert will at last relent and promise to prepare the *cigbe*.[1] He will not, incidentally, communicate the recipe itself; for the individual expert does not teach his craft, save to his own offspring or, perhaps, to a great friend.

We turn to the hereditary medicines proper, hereditary not only incidentally like the individually owned *cigbe*, but as it were *ex hypothesi*, being bound up with the identity of lineages or 'houses' and descending from family head to family head. We already discussed most of the features which set this species of medicine apart from others or, as the Nupe would say, make it 'great' where all others are 'little'. It now remains to examine the role of the sacrifices involved in this possession of *cigbe*.

The sacrifices are of two kinds. A first variety is still concerned with the practice of *cigbe* only. The owner of the 'great' medicine *fúnagba*, for example, who knew numerous other *cigbe* besides, performed a sacrifice of fowl and beer at the *fúnagba* shrine whenever he brewed any of the other, 'little', medicines. Sometimes he added a small quantity of the 'great' medicine in order to make the others more potent, thus using the former as a 'master medicine', unspecific and almost pure force or power. He would accompany the sacrifice with a brief invocation in which the *emisa* is followed by a proper prayer addressed to God and *cigbe*, thus:

'*Fúnagba!* The carpenter who uses the *nunci* tree (i.e. the wrong kind of wood) will fail to build a canoe. *Fúnagba* that now drinketh, Lord God, cause (that it) give us health.'

We note the close similarity between this invocation and those usually addressed to *kuti* or ancestors. The second variety of *cigbe* sacrifice in fact serves the latter purpose; more precisely, it overrules and replaces the normal kinship rites and sacrifices to ancestors. For while ordinary people perform such sacrifices (at birth, marriage, death, and so forth) over a grave or perhaps at a twin shrine, the owner of a 'great' *cigbe* does so over the vessel containing the medicine. In other words, the more rare and more specific instrument of supernatural appeal overrules the more common kind. It seems logical that the owners of such *cigbe*, who are usually well known even though everything else about it will

[1] My own experience bears out the necessity for repeated approaches, though not of the rule 'fourth time lucky'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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be secret, should be considered more fortunate than the ordinary run of people. Yet why this should be so, why some families should have this special standing *in rebus sacris* and others not, is not a question in which the people show any interest. 'There is no fixed number of medicines,' they say, and hence no rule governing or accounting for their distribution.

We need not speak again of the community medicine *zumácikā*, which represents an isolated instance.[1] But we may note certain transitional forms, in which ownership by lineages shades over into ownership by the community. For certain of the hereditary medicines are vested in 'houses' which equally hold hereditary ranks and offices, so that the two possessions go together. When the family head succeeds to the rank, he also assumes charge of the *cigbe*; and the people in fact say of this kind of medicine that it is 'owned' by such-and-such a rank (not person). Now as the rank represents a privileged position ultimately derived from the community and entails duties on its behalf, so the possession of the medicine assumes the aspect of a privilege and duty delegated, by the community, to the particular lineage and its head: these are not so much 'owners' as trustees or guardians, much as the hereditary village priests are appointed guardians of a community *kuti*. Usually the analogy remains on this abstract level; but in one instance it becomes more tangible, when the properties of the hereditary *cigbe* include efficacy as an ordeal: here, then, the possession of *cigbe* ceases to be private, and its application turns fully into a right or duty executed for the well-being of the community.

5. CIGBE AND MORALITY

Excepting the isolated community medicine, no class of *cigbe* is unequivocally good, or for that matter unequivocally evil. But particular medicines may be morally reprehensible, so that all the various groups of *cigbe* experts must in varying degree face the responsibility of practising a craft not above blame or suspicion.

The contraceptive remedies of the barber-doctors and *cigbeciti* represent the mildest case; for though their immorality is a matter of common agreement, almost everybody ignores it in practice, and the *cigbe* practitioners could easily claim the neutrality of experts catering for a public demand. This is indeed the attitude of the barber-doctors. The *cigbeciti*, whose craft is bound up with mystic rules and sacred knowledge, are also more fully aware of the moral conflict; their attempts to justify the dubious practices

[1] There may of course be others, in parts of Nupe which I did not visit. But it is certain that their number is very small.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

by women mostly among the Bida upper classes.[25] Their work is not organized in a guild.

Beadworkers are known as *lantana* and their craft, a luxury industry, consists of the " refining " of crude beads bought from Hausa and Arab traders; it is carried out in the entrance-hut of the compound and is entirely individual. The majority of the workers are paid at piece-rates, one of them acting as contractor, and the chain of finished beads is traded by his wife. This industry is being extinguished by imports of European beads.[26]

Glass-makers (*masaga*) claim to have originated in Egypt. Members of the guild are Moslems. The head (*tura*) is elected by popular vote. They have the most strongly organized and conspicuously self-contained of the Nupe craft guilds and there is a regular system of apprenticeship. This craft is mainly concentrated in Bida town. Black glass (*bikini*) is made, but this is being largely replaced by coloured glass (*kwalaba*) obtained by melting down bottles which have been bought by women traders. The native glass is made in one workshop, while fabrication is completed in others. Glass-workers have their market in their own quarter. Their main products are brightly coloured beads and bangles. Unlike other craftsmen, glass-workers undertake no agricultural work. There is no *bucá* work, all work being *efakó* with small wages.[27]

Tailoring and embroidery are individual crafts and members of the same household may belong to different professions. Tailors, including machine tailors, sometimes visit surrounding villages on their market days to find work. Their main products are caps, plain and embroidered gowns, trousers, and saddle-cloths. Their embroidered gowns are famous all over Nigeria.

Straw-hat makers use a " shape " of clay or wood and the crown of the hat is sometimes partly covered with leather. This is considered a " lazy " occupation, but a few craftsmen who have been taught European designs are well-to-do.

Mat-makers of certain villages, e.g., Kutigi, are famous, and make oval or square, multi-coloured grass mats. The Basa-Nge of Igala Division make baskets and mats.

Leather-workers formerly supplied a large part of the military equipment of the Nupe army—saddlery, leather shields, sword sheaths, quivers for arrows, etc. They work mainly in Bida town.[28]

Barber-doctors cut hair for men, women, and children; shave the head and cut the tribal marks of new-born babies at the naming ceremony and cut toe and finger nails. Individuals specialize in tattooing, medicines for diseases, contraceptives, cures for barrenness, treatment of lunacy, inhalants (*turare*), and minor operations such as circumcision and blood-letting. Hausa barbers remove the uvula of children.

Bida barbers, who are busy and prosperous, do not farm and their sons always become barbers, but this is not a " closed " craft. The length of apprenticeship varies. The most highly paid jobs are regarded by the family group as *efakó*, other jobs as *bucá*. There is a three-fold guild organization in Bida, corresponding to the territories of the three royal houses. Contributions from all *efakó* income are paid to the guild-head, who administers the guild fund, deducting money for common expenses and paying the rest in full to each member of the guild in turn.

There are also " *medicine-men*," whose craft is based on magical ideas and closely connected with divining and the Nupe religious system.[29]

Drummers and dancers, organized in mainly hereditary guilds, but with a system of apprenticeship, are found in all villages. Drumming may be recreational, for ceremony and ritual or ancillary to agricultural production (e.g., farming *egbe*). In

[25] Ibid., pp. 278–82.
[26] Ibid., pp. 282–5.
[27] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 274–8; 1940b, pp. 85–6; Robertson, 1935.
[28] Nadel, 1942, pp. 286–90; Line, 1947; Hopkins, 1934.
[29] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 298–301, and see below, pp. 46–7.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciži*, and two kinds of individual practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

The *cigbeciži*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciži* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of "medicine" for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more "dangerous" medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciži* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society[10] uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

Divination[11]

Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

[10] See below.
[11] Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 36–67.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922
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875 sometimes consult a book before speaking; if it concerns anyone
787 who is absent and unknown to the Mallam, the questioner lays his hand on the ground, at which the Mallam gazes.

In the case of illness the Is-sabi is consulted, as if death is certain it would be mere waste to spend money on doctors and on medicine, as is otherwise done.

759 Some doctors have acquired great reputations, and people travel long distances to consult them. As they are not paid unless they effect a cure, they will not undertake hopeless cases.

764 When a man dies he is buried in the compound in a rectangular-
766 shaped grave, which has three depths, one within the other. The body, which is wrapped in a large new cloth, is laid on a mat on one side in the deepest part, the centre, facing eastwards; wood is placed over it to prevent the earth touching the corpse.
[554] Some of the more important men have a special burial-room in their compound, but with this exception it is the same for men, women, and children. Those who die of small-pox or who commit suicide are, however, taken out and thrown into the bush by dogarai, for no one else will touch them. If a body is being carried home it may never be laid down, so a large number
[184] of bearers are provided to relieve one another. The pagan Nupe pour beer upon the grave, and offer prayers to the spirits.*

765 For seven days after a death the brothers, sons, daughters, and other near relations and friends, come and sit with the bereaved principal from six in the morning till six in the evening. Dirty white clothes constitute mourning apparel, and this is worn for children, parents and spouse.

765 A widower may go out after seven days and work a little,
768 but not much till forty days have elapsed, when he may resume his ordinary habits, though he continues to wear white for five months. Widows, however, remain shut up in the compound for five months, during which time they may not dress their hair, or remove their sandals, or see any man. This over they remarry, and can exercise their own choice as to a groom, being allowed forty days within which to make their arrangements. By the end of this time the law of the country insists on marriage, an old woman getting an old husband, for no one will bury an unmarried woman and, of course, she has no home where she has a right to lie. It is a terror to the widows during their enforced five months of singleness lest they may fall ill or die, for even sickness, following so hard on the tragedy of death, would be considered a sign of evil, and possibly witch-dom, so the woman would find difficulty in securing another husband.

768 The heirs are responsible for all debts incurred by the deceased, whose property is divided between his eldest son, his other

* Sapke and Mokwa.